



Think Dog Consulting

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Re: HB 191 – Pit Bull Ban

My name is Troy Kechely with Think Dog Consulting. As a Peace Officers Standards and Training Council certified instructor for the states of Montana and Idaho I regularly teach classes for animal control and law enforcement officers. Along with that I have testified several times in cases where humans have been attacked by dogs and been hired by numerous agencies, shelters and rescues to evaluate dogs to determine if they are actually aggressive and if the negative behaviors they have can be corrected. Having performed these tasks for almost 12 years I am confident in saying I am an expert on the topic of dog aggression and bite behavior.

The current bill that this hearing is discussing is sadly an attempt to cure the symptoms of a larger problem and will ultimately affect only those people who are already obeying the law while doing little to effect the epidemic of dog bites that is occurring in this country. If the intent of the bill is to protect the people of Montana from aggressive dogs then it would benefit all of you to know what constitutes aggression and what the most aggressive breeds are.

Most statistics on dog aggression are taken from the Center for Disease and Control (CDC) records on dog bites that required treatment. Sadly this does not accurately represent what dogs are truly aggressive as many bites are not reported or require treatment. Additionally these statistics present misleading views of what really is going on. The CDC's own report in 2001 stated the following:

Additional strategies to encourage responsible pet ownership and reduce dog bites include regulatory measures (e.g., licensing, neutering, and registration programs and programs to control unrestrained animals) and legislation (7). **"Dangerous" dog laws focus on dogs of any breed that have exhibited harmful behavior (e.g., unprovoked attacks on persons or animals) and place primary responsibility for a dog's behavior on the owner. Because a dog's tendency to bite depends on other factors in addition to genetics (e.g., medical and behavioral health, early experience, socialization and training, and victim behavior), such laws might be more**

effective than breed-specific legislation (7). — *CDC: Nonfatal Dog Bite--Related Injuries Treated in Hospital Emergency Departments --- United States, 2001*

This report says what most responsible dog owners know. This is not a dog problem or a specific breed problem. This is a human problem.

Because of publicity and repeat occurrences Pit Bulls are singled out as the devil dog with people thinking that any dog resembling a pit bull will just snap and attack people. Anyone who has worked with dogs to any extent will know that this is just plain foolishness.

A 2008 study by the University of Pennsylvania interviewed 6,000 households and instead of looking at just bite incidents it looked at all types of aggression, including growling, snapping, bites and full on attacks at not only humans but also other dogs. It divided its findings into three categories: first aggression towards dogs, next aggression towards humans and lastly overall aggression. It will be no surprise to anyone to find that in the overall aggression list Pit Bulls ranked 4th. What will surprise you is that the three dogs that were ranked more aggressive were the Jack Russell Terrier, the Chihuahua and the Dachshund. While both are smaller dogs they regularly are more aggressive. What is even more surprising is that when looking at the aggression towards humans Pit Bulls drop down to 8th place. It is the fact that they rank 2nd in aggression towards dogs that put them so high overall. The fact that in this study the border collie, cocker spaniel, beagle and other breeds all ranked higher in aggression towards humans than the Pit Bull shows that this is not a breed issue.

In the hundreds of cases where I have been asked to evaluate and assess a dogs temperament and aggressive behaviors, in almost all of those cases I could trace back the aggression being caused by humans; either through lack of training or improper training. Sadly the dogs are simply being a dog.

The recent mauling of a girl in Florence shows what happens when humans interact with the dogs on dogs' terms. The Pit Bull in question attacked the girls' dog, she jumped in and thus was mauled. The unfortunate outcome is all too common yet in reality it was dogs being dogs and humans inevitable getting involved.

My rule is simple and true. All dogs bite. You just have to know what button to push. With this understanding ones perspective turns away from one specific breed but instead on dogs

as a whole. Knowing you can't eliminate dogs from society we must turn our efforts to educating the public on dog behavior and the responsibilities in owning them.

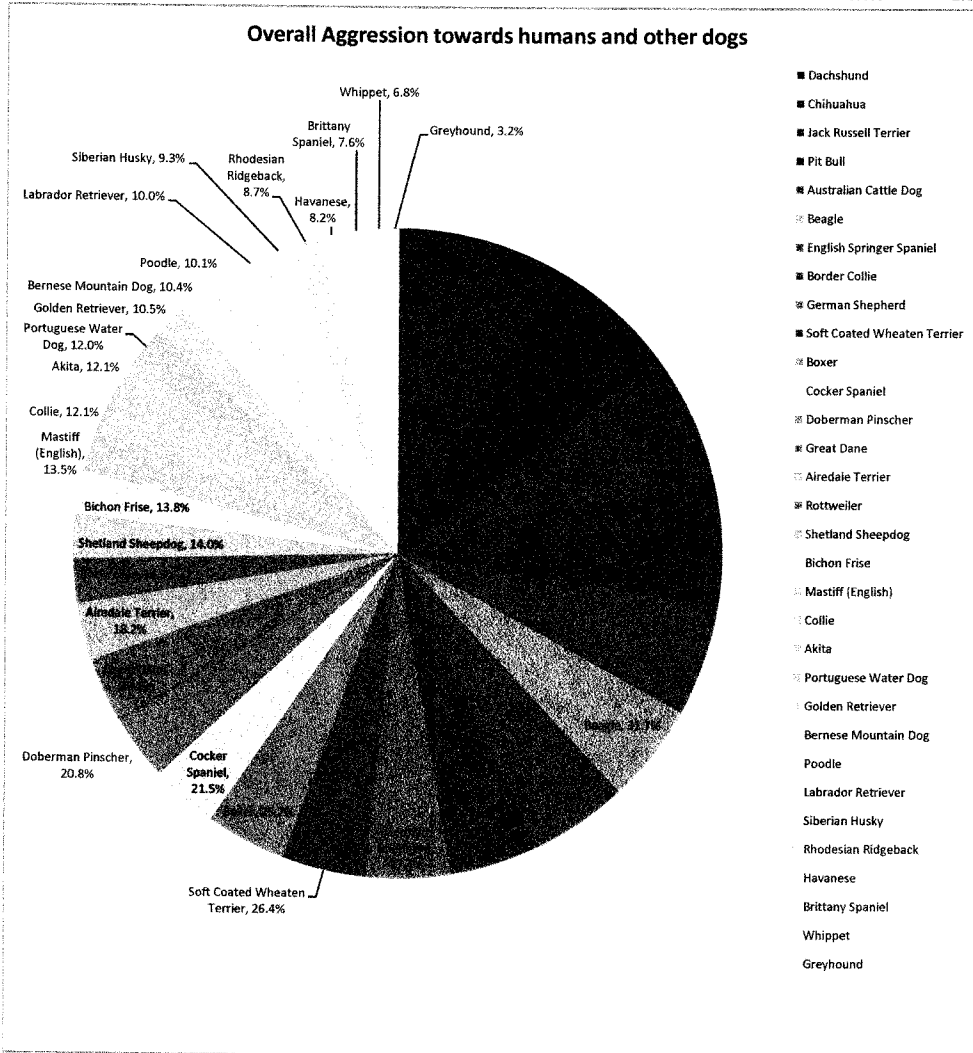
If this legislature wants to protect the people of this state from dog bites then its efforts would be better served by making existing laws on dog fighting, abuse/neglect and hording more stringent. Also by assisting city and county governments in enforcing existing laws as most of these agencies are underfunded and understaffed thus laws and ordinances on the books are left unenforced.

Along with more stringent penalties for dog fighting and abuse/neglect of dogs I recommend that a law be enacted making the use of dogs for the purpose of protection during illegal narcotics activities a felony as is using a firearm in such activities. We need not to punish the breed but instead focus on the people who are taking a breed that has little more potential to do harm than any other and are perverting it thus making it the scourge of society that this legislation is making it out to be.

Thank you.

Ranking of dogs based on overall aggression

Breed	#of dogs	Human Strangers	Owners	Other Dogs	Dog Rivalry	% Humane Aggression	% Dog Aggression	% Overall Aggression
Dachshund	68	14	4	12	5	26.5%	25.0%	51.5%
Chihuahua	56	9	3	10	2	21.4%	21.4%	42.9%
Jack Russell Terrier	78	6	3	17	7	11.5%	30.8%	42.3%
Pit Bull	132	9	3	29	11	9.1%	30.3%	39.4%
Australian Cattle Dog	136	13	2	28	5	11.0%	24.3%	35.3%
Beagle	63	5	5	6	4	15.9%	15.9%	31.7%
English Springer Spaniel	57	2	2	10	4	7.0%	24.6%	31.6%
Border Collie	163	13	3	22	7	9.8%	17.8%	27.6%
German Shepherd	292	13	6	48	13	6.5%	20.9%	27.4%
Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier	216	9	4	35	9	6.0%	20.4%	26.4%
Boxer	70	4	0	11	3	5.7%	20.0%	25.7%
Cocker Spaniel	107	5	6	8	4	10.3%	11.2%	21.5%
Doberman Pinscher	144	8	2	16	4	6.9%	13.9%	20.8%
Great Dane	53	3	1	5	2	7.5%	13.2%	20.8%
Airedale Terrier	66	3	1	6	2	6.1%	12.1%	18.2%
Rottweiler	210	10	2	16	2	5.7%	8.6%	14.3%
Shetland Sheepdog	57	2	2	2	2	7.0%	7.0%	14.0%
Bichon Frise	65	3	1	3	2	6.2%	7.7%	13.8%
Mastiff (English)	126	3	1	8	5	3.2%	10.3%	13.5%
Collie	132	2	3	9	2	3.8%	8.3%	12.1%
Akita	99	3	3	1	5	6.1%	6.1%	12.1%
Portuguese Water Dog	75	2	0	5	2	2.7%	9.3%	12.0%
Golden Retriever	181	2	1	13	3	1.7%	8.8%	10.5%
Bernese Mountain Dog	67	1	2	3	1	4.5%	6.0%	10.4%
Poodle	169	2	0	13	2	1.2%	8.9%	10.1%
Labrador Retriever	349	8	6	15	6	4.0%	6.0%	10.0%
Siberian Husky	54	0	1	3	1	1.9%	7.4%	9.3%
Rhodesian Ridgeback	69	1	0	4	1	1.4%	7.2%	8.7%
Havanese	73	2	0	3	1	2.7%	5.5%	8.2%
Brittany Spaniel	66	0	1	3	1	1.5%	6.1%	7.6%
Whippet	59	0	1	2	1	1.7%	5.1%	6.8%
Greyhound	62	1	0	1	0	1.6%	1.6%	3.2%



World's most and least aggressive dogs, based on a study conducted by researchers Deborah Duffy and James Serpell of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for the Interaction of Animals and Society, and Yuying Hsu of the National Taiwan Normal University. They gathered data from multiple dog clubs and an extensive online survey. For one part of the survey, owners were asked to report on whether or not their dog nips, or tries to attack, unfamiliar (stranger) humans, owners, or other dogs, including whether or not their dog exhibits any rivalry toward other canines in general.